

Participatory Guarantee Systems for sustainable trade and diversified food systems? Perspectives from Bolivia

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Participatory Guarantee Systems



- *"Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) are locally focused quality assurance systems. They certify producers based on active participation of stakeholders and are built on a foundation of trust, social networks and knowledge exchange."*
(IFOAM, 2008)
- Peer-review assessment from the communities
- comprise over 500 000 farmers, 223 known initiatives, 76 countries
- organized locally, e.g. by producers' organizations, or by producer-consumer networks

Participatory Guarantee Systems



- 1) Standards and norms
- 2) Seals and labels
- 3) Documented management procedures
- 4) Pledges
- 5) Defined consequences for non-compliance
- 6) Mechanisms to verify producer compliance



Impacts

- Stronger positive impacts on health and the environment than with other types of certification
- PGS can link producers and consumers in a more accessible and inclusive way than third-party certification
- Alternative approach to sustainability governance, which is more democratic, territorial-based and imply social and local benefits that can go further than organic certification
- But: often threatened by national legislation and are not recognized internationally

PGS in Bolivia

- Law 3525 of 2012 of ecological production (among the 10 countries with a national PGS regulation)
 - “National Council of Ecological Production” in charge of organizing
 - Cost: around BOB 4000 (USD 565) for a PGS certification for 5 years, regardless if it is one producer or a group
- Decrease 2018-2019
- Data from 11 interviews so far, visits to two PGS groups (Achocalla in the highlands and Corocio in the tropical Yungas region)



First results: limitations

- “es un sello para pequeños, no para grandes de exportación.” (Daysi Muñoz, directora UC CNAPE)
- State bureau only organizes workshops, no real support
- Not yet known, little demand for organic food in Bolivia
- Relatively costly, few producers interested
- COVID-19 crisis: much more uncertainty, less follow-up
- Not yet helping to promote sustainable food systems: “nothing is ecological if the neighbours contaminate”
- State needs more mechanisms for sustainable food and agriculture



Onion field, PGS-certified farm in Achocalla/La Paz, August 2019 (Image: D. Toledo)

First results: potentials

- “we can’t export lettuce” (Deysi Muñoz, CNAPE)
→ so far only for the national market. But:
defined by production?
- Export: Successful example quinoa: has PGS (but also organic certification)
- National market: Successful example honey: demand increased during pandemic, honey (with PGS) from Coroico known for high quality
- Honey farmers would like to export, but limited by small-scale artisanal production
- PGS potential for coffee: what is needed that it works?



PGS farmer producing honey, Coroico, August 2019
(Image: D. Toledo)

First results: PGS potential for coffee

- Both promising national and export market developments
- Organic/fair trade cooperatives in crisis due to expensive third-party certification vs. low coffee prices
- PGS farmers in Coroico also produce coffee besides honey, fruits and others
- Main limitation: PGS not yet widely known



PGS-certified coffee farm in Coroico, August 2019
(Image: D. Toledo)

First results: conclusions

- National market still very limited, no price differentiation
 - Need to work beyond labels (all food and ag should be sustainable)
 - Need to work with processed food, not just fresh vegetables
 - Double potential national market (needs advertisement and selling points) and export (coffee, cocoa, quinoa, brazil nut...)
- could replace third-party certification
- needs advertisement, information, supportive traders



Herbs on a PGS-certified farm in Achocalla/La Paz, August 2019 (Image: D. Toledo)

What do trade experts say?

- “We can’t export lettuce” → question of what to certify
- Governments, e.g. Switzerland, don’t «recognize» certification
- But they can create advantages for PGS products (e.g. for nationally and/or IFOAM-recognized PGS initiatives)





Thank you!

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